

Charles & Anne Lindbergh. Pioneer aviators: Charles is one of the first ever “media age” celebrities, having been the first pilot to fly single-handedly across the Atlantic. Anne has been co-pilot and navigator with him on subsequent expeditions – and is poised to emerge as a supremely gifted travel writer. The Lindberghs have come to England to escape media harassment in the furore surrounding the kidnap and murder of their first child.

Harold Nicolson. Family friend of the Lindberghs. Former diplomat, author, recently-elected Member of Parliament.

Vita Sackville-West. Poet, gardener, Harold’s other half in an open marriage.

Sir Robert “Van” Vansittart. Permanent under secretary at the Foreign Office: the most powerful unelected political figure in the inter-war years and *de-facto* leader of a faction committed to securing peace by standing up to Hitler.

Lady Astor and the Cliveden Set. Policy think tank and lobby group opposed to the Vansittart world view.

1. When Harold takes pity on the Lindberghs and offers them refuge at Long Barn, this is misinterpreted as an ambitious political gambit.
2. Van attempts to (re-)acquire Harold’s loyalty by offering political preferment. Harold accepts.
3. Harold distances himself from Charles but seeks to ease Anne’s feeling of isolation by “launching” the Lindberghs in London society.
4. This backfires when Anne is publicly humiliated twice, once in front of the King. Charles is infuriated.
5. But Charles has had his appetite for public life rekindled – and he allies himself to an anti-British faction in US diplomatic circles.
6. Harold is asked by Van to rein Charles in. Harold defends Charles... but he also intensifies his relationship with Anne, partly because he wants to help her but also because he wants to gather intelligence on Charles.
7. Charles and Anne accept an invitation to undertake a fact-finding trip to Germany. This is a set-back for Harold... Meanwhile, both Anne and Charles are compromised in Germany, Charles by falling into a honey trap, Anne by accepting a gift she shouldn’t have.
8. Back home, Harold seeks to ease Anne’s gathering depression by telling her she must become an independent-minded creative woman (like Vita?)... but his relationship with Anne becomes troubled when Charles allies himself with the Cliveden Set.

9. Anne gives birth to her third child, conceived, improbably, during the Berlin trip... and she succumbs to post-natal depression, compounded by Charles telling her they are to visit Germany again... and he reveals he may choose to live there, with or without her.

10. Anne knows she should accept Harold as her Mentor, but their relationship enters a Looking Glass phase – both Charles and Harold seeking to use her to find out what the other is up to.

11. When Anne awakens to the full implications of Charles's political activities, she suffers a serious breakdown – and commits a symbolic act signalling her emotional breach with Charles.

12. Harold, more out of loyalty to Anne than Charles, blocks British Government attempts to discredit Charles – and ultimately to deport him. Having gambled his reputation, he asks for and gets an assurance from Charles that he will never betray Britain.

13. Charles betrays Britain, effectively ending Harold's political career.

14. The Lindberghs flee to France, where Anne, filled with a new resolve, finishes her new, ground-breaking book. Its contents bring matters with Charles to a head – and this puts their marriage into a new perspective.

15. Charles, now hounded out of France for his supposed pro-Nazi sympathies, heads back to the US, where to his immense surprise (his efforts in Germany now deemed a success) he's hailed as a hero.

16. Anne resolves to join him there – but not before writing a long confessional letter to Harold, explaining herself and thanking him for helping to nurture the new Anne. She has resolved to create a new life for herself, based on creative and intellectual freedom. She asks for Harold's forgiveness for past deceptions but pleads for his continuing friendship.

17. This letter is destroyed before it can reach Harold.